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Ministry of Forests and Range

BRITISH COLUMBIA SENDS FIREFIGHTERS TO ALASKA

VICTORIA – British Columbia is sending 12 specialist firefighters and three aircraft to Alaska to respond to forest fires, announced Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman.

"The State of Alaska is experiencing dry conditions combined with lightning strikes," said Coleman. "It's a recipe for forest fires, and British Columbia is pleased to assist our neighbours at this time."

Deployed staff include six rappel firefighters from Salmon Arm, who are dispatched to fight new fire starts in inaccessible terrain by rappelling from helicopters. To support these crews, B.C. will be sending six staff who will operate two air tankers, a helicopter equipped with leading-edge helitank technology unique to B.C., and one bird-dog aircraft that leads the tankers to the fire site.

The fire danger rating in B.C. is currently low, with a seasonal warming and drying trend. Sufficient resources will remain in B.C. should fire activity increase. Deployed crews may be recalled at any time should conditions worsen.

All deployments are co-ordinated through the Northwest Wildland Fire Protection Agreement, which is an agreement between the western provinces, territories, northwest states and Alaska. Costs of the deployment are being paid by the requesting jurisdiction.

The public reports nearly half of all wildfires in B.C. Please continue to report smoke and flames by calling toll-free 1-800-663-5555 or *5555 on most cellular networks.

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Note to media: Alaskan wildfire website: www.dnr.state.ak.us/forestry/fire/

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